



AMBS

window

Summer 2023 | Volume 33, Issue 2

Soto Albrecht urges AMBS graduates to “be where it matters”

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, DMin, encouraged participants at AMBS's April 29 Commencement Service to be the kind of spiritual leaders who are needed today.

“We need to speak mostly outside the church — to be prophetic and pastoral in a priestly manner,” said the author, former seminary professor and chaplain-interpreter in her commencement address. “I want to challenge you to dress the part and show up. That’s what Christianity looks like today. Go to the

courthouses; be where it matters. In the schools; be where it matters. Don’t stay in the four walls of the church. Make the church move.”

Around 140 people attended the service in the seminary’s Chapel of the Sermon on the

Mount in Elkhart, Indiana — including 10 of the 20 members of the Class of 2023. Seven of the 20 made up the first cohort of Ethiopian students to complete their degree entirely from Ethiopia.

Soto Albrecht, who is from Arecibo, Puerto Rico, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is an ordained minister

and the first Latina to have served as Moderator of Mennonite Church USA (2013–15). In her address, she focused on the Apostle Paul’s farewell letter to his disciple Timothy (found in 2 Timothy), encouraging the graduates “to present yourselves to God as approved” (2 Timothy 2:15).

“Today this institution has said, ‘You are approved.’ The communities that sent you here blessed you to be here,” she said. “But the ultimate approval that we need to achieve is from God. Paul is saying to Timothy, ‘Whatever you have achieved as a church planter, as a pastor, as my disciple, be sure that you present yourself to God. In that moment, no [seminary] degree matters; nothing else matters. It’s just you and the Creator God.’

She described three levels of faith formation seen in the life of Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Gentile). He was shaped by the influence of the faith of his grandmother, Lois, and *(continued on p. 2)*



Top: Ten of the graduates celebrate in the AMBS Library following the Commencement Service.

Above: Elizabeth Soto Albrecht delivers the commencement address.

“I want to challenge you to dress the part and show up. Don’t stay in the four walls of the church. Make the church move.”

AMBS Window is a publication of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

(continued from p. 1)

his mother, Eunice. He was formed by learning from his mentor, Paul. And he had his own experiences, which were reflected in his learnings and witness to others. Soto Albrecht emphasized Paul's charge to Timothy to pass his faith on to others.

"Today we want to charge all of you for what is coming," she said. "I know that with your skill sets, having mastered these disciplines and competencies will help you translate this gospel into a world that needs a lot of translation, and I'm not talking about language translation but about

life translation. The gospel is not only about accepting it and joining the church, but it is also about one's capacity to share with others the truth we have learned and live by."

She noted that the type of spiritual leaders needed today are "those who are not full of religious language."

"We need multilingual leaders, multicultural navigators who are not afraid to use their prophetic imagination inside and outside of the church," she said. "Grab your people from the church, and let's go to where it matters. Those are the spiritual leaders we need today — who can speak the language of politics, of social media, of mental health ... who can speak many languages and translate this to society and to the church."

"We can never be church the way it used to be," she continued. "We need to face a different way of being the *iglesia*, the body of Christ."

After the graduates received their degrees and certificates, **Andy Brubacher Kaethler**, PhD,

Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Culture at AMBS, charged them to "go forth, into the world, and boldly engage in holy mischief." He clarified that "holy mischief" is not physical violence and does not perpetuate economic, political or social injustice. Rather, it reveals the kingdom of God, witnesses to Jesus' good news of justice and reconciliation for all, exposes injustice to persons and to creation, and nurtures hope and joy for those who need it most.

"Holy mischief disrupts systems of oppression by intercepting hate and transforming it into empathy, by reforming anger into righteous indignation, by redirecting violence into well mannered frivolity — in short, in confounding the principalities and powers," he said. "You will know you are succeeding when you see systems changing, if ever so slowly."

Allan Rudy-Froese, PhD, Associate Professor of Christian Proclamation at AMBS, gave examples from Jesus' life and ministry as he modified a blessing for the graduates from *Voices Together 1058* (MennoMedia, 2020). He asked God to bless them with restless discomfort about easy answers and half-truths; holy anger at injustice and oppression; the gift of tears for all who suffer pain, rejection and trauma; foolishness to believe they can make a difference in the world; play and playfulness; and "out-of-the-box thinking."

A video of the service is available at ambs.edu/graduation. • — *Annette Brill Bergstresser*

Go forth, into
the world, and
boldly engage
in holy mischief.

We need multilingual leaders, multicultural navigators who are not afraid to use their prophetic imagination inside and outside of the church.

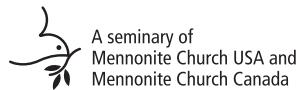
AMBS Window Summer 2023

Volume 33, Issue 2

Distributed two times a year as a supplement to *Anabaptist World* and *Canadian Mennonite*.

Editors: Annette Brill Bergstresser, Melissa Troyer
Designer: Rachel A. Fonseca
Commencement photographer: Jason Bryant

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
3003 Benham Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46511, USA
574.295.3726 • contact@ambs.edu



The Class of 2023

Graduates by degree

- 8*** Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism
- 6** Master of Divinity
- 3** Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies
- 3** Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

*Seven of the MATGA graduates made up the first cohort of Ethiopian students to complete the program entirely from Ethiopia through a partnership between AMBS and Meserete Kristos Seminary (see p. 6).

Graduates by ministry

- 8** serving in pastoral ministry roles or seeking pastoral assignments
- 4** serving in a church organization or institution
- 3** pursuing or seeking to pursue further graduate studies
- 2** serving in mission or evangelism
- 2** seeking work in peacebuilding and social justice
- 1** pursuing further chaplaincy education
- 1** seeking a teaching assignment
- 1** working in mental health
- 1** working with children's spiritual formation
- 1** discerning future plans

Meet our new graduates!

Each graduate received one of the following degrees or certificates at AMBS's April 29 Commencement Service.

- MDiv *Master of Divinity*
- MATGA *Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism*
- MATPS *Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies*
- Certificate *Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies*

* Candidates who have six or fewer credits left to complete toward their degree

► Candidates who completed part or all of their degree or certificate at a distance



Debbie Renee Bledsoe (most recently from Raleigh, North Carolina). MDiv: *Pastoral Ministry*. Debbie is serving as a licensed pastor at Southside Fellowship in Elkhart. She is discerning a call to a pastoral position within Mennonite Church Canada. Her home congregation is Raleigh Mennonite Church.



► **Girma Gelaye Bossen** (Chiro, Ethiopia). MATGA. Girma will continue to serve as General Secretary of the Miserete Kristos Church office in the West Hararghe Zone of the Oromia Region of Ethiopia,



leading and overseeing 17 local churches and 30 new church plants. His home congregation is Asebe Teferi/Chiro Miserete Kristos Church.



► **Felecia Calloni** (calls many places home). MDiv: *Chaplaincy*. Felecia plans to spend the next year in residency as a hospital chaplain, working towards Board of Chaplaincy Certification through the Association of Professional Chaplains. She then plans to pursue chaplain educator training through the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. Her home congregation is Portland (Oregon) Mennonite Church.

The members of the Class of 2023 who were present for the April 29 Commencement Service.

Graduates by demographic

- 12 men
- 8 women
- 5 countries represented — Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, United States, Zimbabwe
- 10 completed part or all of their seminary studies at a distance
- 7 lived on campus for at least part of their studies
- 4 previously earned graduate degrees from other schools
- 11 affiliated with Mennonite Church USA
- 8 affiliated with the Miserete Kristos Church (Ethiopian Mennonite Church)
- 2 affiliated with the Brethren in Christ
- 1 affiliated with Mennonite Church Canada

AMBS's pedagogy of knowing, being and doing helped me to examine my toxic embedded theology and reconstruct it into a mission of shalom. — Felecia Calloni



► **Desta Gadisa Debele** (Adola, Oromia Region, Ethiopia). MATGA. Desta anticipates working in pastoral ministry and exploring cross-cultural mission work. He serves as chair of the Adola Town Evangelical Fellowship and as Coordinator of the Education Committee of the East Guji Zone Miserete Kristos Church. His home congregation is Adola Town Miserete Kristos Church.

2023 COMMENCEMENT



► **Ian Funk** (Surrey, British Columbia, Canada). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry.* Ian will continue to serve as a pastor with Langley (British Columbia) Mennonite Fellowship.



Fred Longenecker (South Bend, Indiana; Hatfield, Pennsylvania). *Certificate.* Fred plans to continue working part time as a mental health recovery coach with Oaklawn Psychiatric Center in Goshen, Indiana, while increasing his work with children's spirituality and formation. His home congregation is Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend.

“ AMBS is a diverse and increasingly global community that understands that there is no one way to be Anabaptist. This community has allowed me to do the difficult and gratifying work of learning where I fit within the Anabaptist mosaic and why Anabaptism matters to me, my community and the world. — Ian Funk



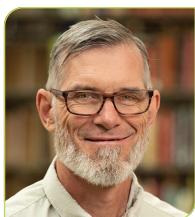
Ben J. Graber (Goshen, Indiana). *Certificate.* Ben plans to continue his seminary studies in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation program at AMBS. His home congregation is East Goshen Mennonite Church.



Abby Hershberger (Millersburg, Ohio). *MATPS.* Abby is currently working as the Storyteller with Mennonite Life (formerly Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

She attends James Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster.

“ I grew in empathy and appreciation for the wide global church and for the small communities I get to be a part of. I also learned to fully embrace the role of creativity and imagination in theological interpretation. — Abby Hershberger



***Andrew Ray Hudson** (Portland, Oregon; Sarasota, Florida; Elkhart, Indiana). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry.* Andrew is developing a ministry of helping congregations grow in their sense of

sacred belonging to place and land, drawing especially on biblical wisdom to do so. His home congregation is Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota; locally, he has attended Fellowship of Hope in Elkhart.



Sibonokuhle Ncube (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Peace Studies.* Sibonokuhle is serving as Regional Director for Africa and Europe with Mennonite Mission Network in Elkhart.

Her home congregation is Brethren in Christ Community Church in Bulawayo; locally, she has attended Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana.

“ My time at AMBS has been worthwhile for strengthening my inner and outer call through the virtuous co-creative tension inherent in study, service, community and renewed spirituality. — Sibonokuhle Ncube



***Julieta Orrego** (Bogotá, Colombia). *MATPS.* Julieta plans to apply to do a term of Optional Practical Training in the United States, working in a peacebuilding and/or social justice-related organization.

Her home congregation is the former Veraguas Brethren in Christ Church in Bogotá; locally, she has attended Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

“ AMBS was a space to learn about multiple perspectives, cultures and worldviews from my professors and classmates. It also allowed me to discern my further vocation as a peacebuilder deeply rooted in my faith as an Anabaptist.

— Julieta Orrego



***Anna Ressler** (Kidron, Ohio). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry.* Anna is pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. Her home congregation is Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron; locally, she has attended Sunnyside Mennonite Church in Elkhart.



Deanna Risser (Goshen, Indiana). *Certificate.* Deanna will continue in her role as Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer of AMBS. Her home congregation is Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen.



Anteneh Setegn (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). *MATPS.* Anteneh plans to serve somewhere in the United States for a limited time in peace and justice-related work while also preparing peace and justice Bible study materials for the Meserete Kristos Church.



***Teferi Beyene Setena** (Dire Dawa, Oromia Region, Ethiopia). *MATGA.* Teferi is a pastoral minister, focusing on peacemaking and discipleship in Christ. He also would like to pursue additional studies in peace theology. His home congregation is Mehal Dire Dawa Meserete Kristos Church.



***Getachew Tegegne** (Gondar, Amhara Region, Ethiopia). *MATGA.* Getachew is a full-time evangelist with Gondar Meserete Kristos Church.



***Frew Zinna Tuke** (Adama, Oromia Region, Ethiopia). *MATGA.* Frew has begun teaching at different Bible colleges and seminaries and hopes to obtain a permanent teaching position. He also would like to prepare himself for further advancements in theological studies. His home congregation is North Nazareth Meserete Kristos Church in Adama/Nazareth, the first Mennonite congregation in Ethiopia.

My seminary experience has been valuable particularly in terms of Christian leadership, understanding the concepts of peace and reconciliation, knowledge of theology, developing hermeneutical skills, and understanding Anabaptist-Mennonite history and theology. — **Frew Zinna Tuke**



***Sandra Vielman** (Plantation, Florida). *MATGA.* Sandra is discerning future plans. Her home congregation is Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart.



***Tariku Delelew Wondimu** (Shinshicho, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia). *MATGA.* Tariku is a full-time pastor with East Shinshicho Meserete Kristos Church.

God used the professors and community of AMBS to satisfy my long-standing thirst for the Word, and by opening my spiritual eyes through his Word, made my whole being and my personality ready for more service.

— **Tariku Delelew Wondimu**



***Sisay Gizaw Worku** (Dire Dawa, Administration Council, Ethiopia). *MATGA.* Sisay plans to continue serving as a pastor with Mehal Dire Dawa Meserete Kristos Church, where he has served since 2001.



My time of learning with AMBS has prepared me to develop biblical teachings that are fundamental for peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes. — **Sisay Gizaw Worku**

MKS honors first Ethiopian MATGA cohort

Seven AMBS graduates made up the first cohort of Ethiopian students to complete the **MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism** (MATGA) entirely from Ethiopia through a partnership between AMBS and **Meserete Kristos Seminary** (MKS) in Bishoftu/Debre Zeit that began in 2019.

The MATGA graduates — all MKS alumni — were honored along with 94 undergraduate MKS graduates

during MKS's Commencement Service on May 20. At the service, Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) President **Desalegn Abebe** encouraged them to take risks, broaden their horizons and adopt an open-minded and tolerant attitude towards others.

"A crucial challenge of education is to transform skills and intelligence into wisdom," he said. ●

— Henok T. Mekonin, Annette Brill Bergstresser



(l. to r.): MATGA graduates Teferi Setena, Tariku Wondimu, Sisay Worku, Getachew Tegegne, Frew Tuke, Desta Debele and Girma Bossen ring their AMBS bells in celebration. (Credit for both photos: Mercy MH Abiy)



Girma Bossen (at left) receives his diploma from MKC President Desalegn Abebe. At right, Daniel B. Grimes, former Administrative Faculty member, and Beverly Lapp, Vice President and Academic Dean, represented AMBS, with Lapp serving as keynote speaker.

Graduates receive awards

AMBS Teaching and Administrative Faculty members presented awards to selected candidates for graduation at the Dean's Luncheon on April 28. This year's recipients (l. to r.):

- **Abby Hershberger:** Award for Excellence in Theological Studies
- **Sibonokuhle Ncube:** Award for Excellence in Missional Leadership
- **Debbie Bledsoe:** Award for Excellence in Preaching
- **Anna Ressler:** Award for Excellence in Biblical Interpretation
- **Felecia Calloni:** Award for Excellence in Chaplaincy
- **Ian Funk:** Award for Excellence in Pastoral Ministry and Christian Formation (*not pictured*)
- **Frew Tuke:** Award for Excellence in Theological Studies (*not pictured*)

Additionally, **Andrew Hudson** received a Commendation in Garden Leadership, **Julieta Orrego** and **Anteneh Setegn** each received a



Commendation in Global Peace Studies, and **Sandra Vielman** received a Commendation in Intercultural Peace Studies.

Graduates also received two issues of *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* from the Institute of Mennonite Studies; access to a religion database from the AMBS Library; a free Leadership Clinic registration from the Church Leadership Center; and an Admissions Application fee waiver to share with a prospective student. ●

Practical Leadership Training program to launch in August

In 2021, AMBS leaders entered into a deep listening process with church leaders, asking, **“What is the most meaningful thing that AMBS can do to support current and future leaders for the church?”**

Many leaders shared that seminary had prepared them well for Bible study, preaching and pastoral care – but that they needed more. Specifically, they needed practical leadership skills to meet challenges resulting from the pandemic, polarization, shifting church commitments and an unpredictable future.

In response, AMBS is launching a new **Practical Leadership Training** program to help pastors, lay leaders, community leaders and leaders of nonprofit organizations increase their capacity to provide effective Anabaptist leadership in a variety of settings. The program consists of modules of varying lengths and formats focusing on **administration, leadership, contextual engagement and well-being**. Participants can select the modules that are best suited to their interests and needs, and program leaders will adjust the offerings along the way – based on feedback from students, churches and organizations.

Luis Tapia Rubio (MDiv 2021), Director of Practical Leadership Training, is drawing on his



experiences in pastoral ministry, administration, research and teaching in Chile, Ecuador and the U.S. to develop and implement the new modules, in consultation with an external advisory team of organizational, nonprofit, church, mission and business leaders.

“I’m excited about the leadership education these modules will offer to existing and future leaders,” said **David Boshart**, PhD, President. “In developing this program, we’re finding that leaders in every sector of society are asking for the same leadership skills to meet the same basic challenges. The leadership education that AMBS has to offer is not just for pastors!”

Modules to be offered in 2023 include:

- Guide Your Congregation through Polarization
- Intercultural Inclusion: From Symbolic to Shared Power
- Leading Congregations in Transition
- Liderazgo que edifica (taught in Spanish)
- Practices and Principles for Effective Boards
- Practicing Resilience in Response to Trauma
- and more!

Learn more: ambs.edu/plt •

(l. to r.): AMBS students Dee Awoke, Chialis Thuan and Melika Kauffman Hershberger in Leah Thomas' Pastoral Care 1 class in April. (Credit: Brittany Purlee)

Boshart reappointed

The Boards of Directors of AMBS and Mennonite Education Agency and the Mennonite Church Canada Joint Council have reappointed **David Boshart**, PhD, for a second four-year term as AMBS President, beginning July 1, 2023.



“David has proven to be an exceptional leader for AMBS,” said AMBS Board Chair **James Gunden**. “Faculty and staff have been energized by his leadership and have valued his humble nature as he has built relationships within and outside of AMBS. His many years of experience in church leadership have served to strengthen the seminary’s domestic and international partnerships.”

Employee transitions

The AMBS learning community marked the following transitions in 2022–23. Others were reported in the Winter 2023 *AMBS Window*.

- **Norm Cender** was promoted to Director of Maintenance and Campus Safety on Aug. 1, 2022, following Jeff Marshall’s retirement from the role on July 31. Cender first joined AMBS’s Maintenance and Campus Security Team in February 2012 and took on the role of Assistant Director of Maintenance later that year.
- **Ben Parker Sutter**, MA, ended his time as Digital Marketing Manager on April 13, 2023, after nearly five years of service.



JOURNEY: A Missional Leadership Development Program

Do you want to explore a call to ministry?

Our distance-friendly Journey program will equip you for ministry in your local church and community as a leader centered in Jesus Christ – whether you're an active member of a congregation, a pastor with or without formal education, a church planter or a lay leader.

Nurture your leadership abilities, grow in spiritual practices and deepen your understanding of Anabaptist theology and ministry with the guidance of a dedicated pastoral mentor, experienced facilitators and a supportive community of peers.

Program components

- Five 20-week online courses (undergraduate-level)
- Meetings with your mentor every two weeks
- Two in-person Weekend Learning Events each year
- Length: two and a half to three years

Learn more: ambs.edu/journey



(l. to r.): Journey participants Bikash Shankhar, Ly Vang, Bethany Yoder and Bill DeVries pray together at a Weekend Learning Event in 2022.
(Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

UPCOMING OFFERINGS

Online Short Courses

• Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible

Sept. 13 – Oct. 24, with Drew Strait, PhD, and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, PhD

• Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology

Oct. 25 – Dec. 12, with Jamie Pitts, PhD

ambs.edu/online-short-courses

Transition to Leadership

This program guides new pastors during the crucial first years of ministry. Apply by Oct. 8 to start Nov. 8.
ambs.edu/transition-to-leadership

Ministry Integrity Circles

Pastors, need help with ministry transitions or significant challenges? This program provides the support of consultants within a community of peers. Two cohorts will begin this fall.
ambs.edu/integrity-circles

Pastors & Leaders 2024

Feb. 19–22: Save the date!
ambs.edu/pastors-and-leaders

Invite AMBS

Faculty members are available to speak on trauma-informed caregiving, non-violent communication, intercultural competence, confessional Bible study, and more. Ask about virtual visits!
ambs.edu/invite

Rooted and Grounded Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship

Sept. 28–30: This conference on Pathways through Climate Doom: Resistance and Resilience will examine theological, biblical and pastoral care responses to climate doom. Attend in person or online! Keynote speakers: Kaitlin Curtice; Leah Thomas, PhD; Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, PhD.
ambs.edu/rooted-and-grounded

Free journals online

- *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 24.1 (Spring 2023) on "Uncertainty": ambs.edu/vision
- *Anabaptist Witness* 10.1 (April 2023) on "Mission and Education": anabaptistwitness.org

Practical Leadership Training modules

Strengthen your skills and capacity for effective leadership (see p. 7).

ambs.edu/plt

Semester One courses

(Aug. 29 – Dec. 8) Distance-friendly options include Faith Formation and Spirituality: Children; The Hebrew Bible and Its Contexts; History of Christianity in Africa; Luke-Acts: Gospeling Peace Amid Empire; Reading Cultural Contexts; Somatic Spiritual Practices; and more! Campus courses are also available. Some courses may be audited. Nonadmitted students get 50% off their first three credit hours.
ambs.edu/upcoming-courses

You can afford seminary!

Learn about AMBS's generous need-based financial aid, scholarships and church matching grants that can help you study either on campus or at a distance, full time or part time.
ambs.edu/affordability